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## Fact Sheet

### Summary

EPA is publishing for public comment a draft of the *Implementation Guidance for Ambient Water Quality Criteria for Bacteria*. You can download the document from EPA's website at <http://www.epa.gov/waterscience/standards/bacteria>. When final, this document will help protect recreational waters by giving state, territory, and authorized tribal water quality programs guidance on how to adopt and implement bacteriological water quality criteria. We expect that this document will also serve as a valuable resource for state and local beach program managers and interested citizens.

### Background

We started working on this guidance in 1999 in response to a commitment in the 1999 *Action Plan for Beaches and Recreational Waters* (Action Plan) for EPA to provide guidance to states, territories and authorized tribes on implementing EPA's 1986 recommended water quality criteria for bacteria for *E. coli* and enterococci. As we developed the document, the scope of issues increased in response to input received by the Agency and the passage of the Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health Act of 2000. Consequently, we expanded the draft document to include such topics as the states' and authorized tribes' transition from their existing fecal coliform criteria to *E. coli* and enterococci criteria, implementing the criteria in waters impacted by non-human sources of fecal contamination, implementing the bacteriological criteria in tropical climates, incorporating the criteria in water quality-based effluent limits, interpreting monitoring data to support attainment and listing decisions, and developing Total Maximum Daily Loads.

### About this Draft Guidance Document

When final, the *Implementation Guidance for Ambient Water Quality Criteria for Bacteria* will guide state, territory, and authorized tribal water quality programs in adopting and implementing bacteriological water quality criteria to protect waters designated for recreation. EPA will consider any comments received by August 2, 2002, as we prepare the final document. We expect to publish the final document by December 2002. This document may also serve as a useful resource for state and local beach program managers and interested members of the public. Once final, the guidance will help states, territories, and authorized tribes implement their bacteria criteria to protect waters designated for recreation. In most states, territories, and authorized tribes this includes identified beach areas as well as waters used by the occasional hiker.

### Environmental and Public Health Benefits

Our Nation's waters are a valuable recreational resource. Whether swimming and recreating in the water, seeking adventure through white water rafting, surfing, or kayaking, or simply enjoying

their beauty while hiking or birdwatching, it is important to protect our waters to ensure these activities may be enjoyed safely. Adopting and appropriately implementing bacteria criteria will provide the means to protect recreational waterbodies and the people who use them across the United States .

### **How to Get Additional Information**

The draft guidance is available on EPA's website at <http://www.epa.gov/waterscience/standards/bacteria>. For more information, you can call Elizabeth Southerland, Director of the Standards and Health Protection Division or William Morrow, Assistant Branch Chief in the Water Quality Standards Branch (both at 202-566-0400). We will accept comments on this draft until August 2, 2002. You should send your comments to William Morrow, Assistant Branch Chief, Water Quality Standards Branch (Mail Code 4305T), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20460. You can also e-mail your comments to ([bacteria.guidance@epa.gov](mailto:bacteria.guidance@epa.gov)).